

GUIDE TO CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

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For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

POWER FROM ON HIGH:

A SERMON, BY REV. S. S. SMITH.

—INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY THE AUTHOR.

In January last, at a regular meeting of the Association of which I am a member, it fell to my lot to read a sermon for the usual criticism on such an occasion. As my mind had for some time previous labored upon the subject here presented, I selected it as a theme of discourse; partly that I might be shown the way of God more perfectly if I had adopted an error, and partly that my brethren might be led to examine the doctrine, if true. Of the criticisms of most of the brethren present, I had no occasion to complain;—they were kind and courteous—characteristic of the general spirit of the brethren. No one then showed me, or even undertook to show me, by scripture argument, that I had departed from “our only rule of faith and practice” in the general doctrine of the discourse; and I went out from the meeting without having my belief in the truth of it shaken in the least degree. Since then, I have preached the sermon upon an ordination occasion; and have also preached it and others of a similar character, before the people of my present charge; and I have likewise read it to many individual clerical brethren; not one of whom has directly dissented from the doctrine of the discourse, or expressed fear for the peace and purity of the church from the advocacy of it. And yet the original reading of the discourse has laid me, somewhat extensively, under the imputation of being a “Perfectionist;” a name which,—as attached to a certain class of antinomian errorists,—I have ever abhorred, and do still abhor. It has even been said that I “came out fully and decidedly before the association, in favor of Perfectionism;” and some of my brethren have recently frankly avowed to me that my advocacy of this doctrine authorizes them to say that I have embraced dangerous, and even

fundamental errors. Now without imputing to these brethren any other desire than that of promoting the "peace and prosperity of Zion," still it is my privilege to state publicly what these "*dangerous doctrines*" are that I have embraced, rather than leave it to be inferred by those who may hear only that I have departed from the "faith which was once delivered to the saints." Here is the "head and front of my offending;" here my only departure from the modern footsteps of the flock. Already I have suffered from the direct charge of Perfectionism preferred against me by some of my brethren in the ministry; and I may on this account be called to still greater trials; yet I desire to possess my soul in patience, while at the same time I deem it my duty to publish far and wide the blessed truth that Jesus Christ is still he that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

The Sermon was written without any expectation of its being thus called to pass from manuscript to print; but the circumstances above alluded to have drawn it out. The notes have been added since I have decided to publish; and they are added in this form, that the body of the sermon may remain,—a few verbal alterations excepted,—the same that I read before the association.

NEWTON CENTRE, NOV., 1840.

SERMON.

Luke xxiv. 49. "But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

The design of the present discourse will not permit a protracted notice of the nature of the moral conflict that is pending between the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the "God of this world—the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Suffice it to say, the Captain of our salvation well understood the nature of this conflict, and the qualifications requisite for carrying it on to a triumphant issue. When, therefore, he was about to ascend to his throne in the heavens, and leave the work which he had so conspicuously begun to be carried on by his followers, he knew what power they needed to enable them to fulfil their high commission successfully. Having commanded them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, as the only means of subverting the powers of darkness, he also commanded them not to commence this great work with their present degree of piety, or measure of faith; but to "tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high;"—"for ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost," said he, "not many days hence."

As the surprising success of the primitive church stands immediately connected with this endowment of power from on high, and without which she would have labored comparatively in vain for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth, it is an important subject of inquiry,

I. WHAT WAS THE POWER PROMISED IN THE TEXT?

II. WHY WAS IT GRANTED TO THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH? and

III. WAS IT THE DESIGN OF OUR LORD TO CONTINUE THAT POWER IN THE CHURCH TO THE END OF THE WORLD?

I. *What was the power, &c.* I answer first, negatively:—It was not regeneration, or the new birth, without which a man cannot enter the “kingdom of Heaven.” The one hundred and twenty who were baptized with the Holy Ghost on the day of pentecost, had previously been “born of God.” Christ had called them *friends*,—had assured them that their names were written in Heaven, and that where he went they should go also. Although it is said, John vii. 39, that “the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*, because that Jesus was not yet glorified;” yet this must relate to some other operation of the Spirit than that of regeneration, unless indeed we come to the conclusion that no person on earth was regenerated previous to the day of pentecost*—a conclusion the Christian church will be slow to adopt.

* This is a prominent doctrine of the sect called “Perfectionists;”—a doctrine so fundamentally erroneous, however, that it can find but few advocates in this enlightened age of the church. It is by no means certain that the addition of the word *given*, to the original of the text above quoted, correctly expresses the meaning of the inspired writer. The Holy Ghost had been given to all ancient saints;—and Zacharias and Elizabeth are said to have been filled with the Holy Ghost; as was also John Baptist, even from his birth. And yet John said to Jesus, “I have need to be baptized of thee;” which certainly could not have been the case, had not the baptism which Jesus gave, been peculiar to the Christian dispensation;—unlike what had ever before been enjoyed by the saints of God. The peculiarity of this baptism was that it revealed Jesus Christ to the believer as the only appropriate object of evangelical faith. “When he,—the comforter,—is come, he shall glorify me, for he shall take of the things of mine and shall show them unto you.” This the Holy Spirit had never done to ancient saints, who had desired to see this new dispensation of grace, and had not seen it. God in Christ could not have been seen by the eye of faith previous to the incarnation and subsequent exaltation of Jesus. “Probably most of those devotional expressions in the Old Testament, which raise *our* thoughts to Heaven, only carried the thoughts of the Israelites within the veil. The whole of their worship was a presentiment and promise of the approaching manifestation of God in Christ; and not merely a

Evidently the gift of the Holy Ghost here alluded to, is the power from on high referred to in the text, and as evidently it was not regeneration.

It was not the spirit of inspiration. The Old Testament writers were inspired without this *power*; and but five of those who received it on the day of pentecost, were employed as sacred penmen; and three only of the subsequent thousands who were similarly endued, were so employed by the Holy Ghost.

It was not the power of working miracles. Paul says, "To one was given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom—to another, the word of

promise of it, but an actual provision to aid them in lifting their thoughts to God, and conceiving of the Divine Personality, till that more glorious manifestation should take place." Christ is the image of the invisible God; and now the Holy Ghost presents him to the soul of the believer as the only "permanent, adequate, apprehensible representation of the invisible Deity." "When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me," says Paul; and this revelation was made, probably, not when he was converted on his way to Damascus, but when he was subsequently *filled*, or *baptized with the Holy Ghost*; Acts ix. 17. "My little children, for whom I travel in birth again, till Christ be formed in you," said Paul to the Galatians. He had once travelled in birth for their conversion, and they were become "little children;" but they had not been baptized with the Holy Ghost. The comforter, which was Jesus Christ in the soul the hope of glory, was given only by this baptism; and therefore John could appropriately say that this particular ministration of the spirit *was not yet, because that Jesus, who was thereby to be revealed, was not yet glorified.*

A similar mistake in the meaning of the inspired text is made in our translation of Acts xix. 2; where the twelve disciples whom Paul met at Ephesus are made to say that they had not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost; thus making them manifest a degree of ignorance wholly inexcusable in a Jew, or a disciple of John, and proving conclusively that they were not disciples, and that Paul might as well have asked any other twelve men at Ephesus, as themselves, whether they had received the Holy Ghost. But these were disciples,—they had been born of the Spirit,—and Paul asked them if they had also been baptized with the Holy Ghost—or whether the Comforter, which is Christ in the soul the hope of glory, had visited them? and they replied that they had not heard of this new ministration of the Spirit. Dr. Bloomfield refers Paul's inquiry, and the answer of these disciples, to John vii. 39, where it is said, that "the Holy Ghost was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." There can hardly be a doubt in the mind of an intelligent Bible reader, that John meant to say that the "ministration of the Spirit," which Paul says, 2 Cor. iii. 7—11, excels in glory the ancient dispensation, *was not yet.* And it must also be evident that this "ministration" belongs to the present age of the church, as much as it did to the primitive; and consequently that we need the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as much as the apostles, or Ephesian disciples did.

knowledge—to another, the gifts of healing—to another, miracles—to another, divers kinds of tongues ;—all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” “Are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues?” &c. Evidently, then, the power from on high was not necessarily a power to work miracles. God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, and of Peter and John; but there is no evidence that he did by any of the household of Cornelius, upon whom the Holy Ghost fell as it did upon the disciples on the day of pentecost. Had the thousands, who were baptized with the Holy Ghost as well as Peter, received by that baptism the power of healing, it would hardly have been necessary to bring the sick into the streets, that the shadow of Peter passing by might fall upon some of them. This power was seldom granted to any, and never lodged even with this favored few. Peter could not deliver himself from prison; and Paul could not heal Trophimus, whom he once left at Miletum, sick.

It was not a spirit of infallibility. The apostles did not know that Ananias and Sapphira were hypocrites, until their subsequent words proved them so. Philip baptized Simon Magus; and Paul received Demas, and Alexander the coppersmith, and many other false brethren, who subsequently did both him and the church great damage. So far as some of them were inspired, their words were infallible truth; but as the baptism with the Holy Ghost was not itself the spirit of inspiration, it did not necessarily render its subjects infallible. Neither did it translate them into a state of confirmed sanctification, or sinless perfection.* Paul had occasion to watch,

* By “*sinless perfection*,” I understand a “*state of sanctification*” in which there is *not* a momentary liability to fall into sin, and which does not call for continual watchfulness and prayer. Such a state is no where to be found this side heaven, and is no where demanded of us in the Bible;—it would not be a state of probation, but of final attainment—of retribution. With the late excellent Dr. Emmons, I fully believe that “the imperfection of Christians consists in the inconstancy of that holy ‘love which is the fulfilling of the law,’ rather than in the imperfection of that love itself.” The pious John Newton could say, “There are seasons when I love God with all my heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and I long for the harp and the tongue of an angel wherewith to express that love. But, alas, those seasons are generally of short duration.” Now how inconstant the apostles and primitive Christians were in the exercise of *such love*, I have no means of knowing.

and pray, and keep under his body, lest, having preached to others, he himself should be cast away.

What, then, was the power from on high promised in the text? I answer, second, affirmatively :—It was such a measure and fulness of the divine influence as transformed the whole moral character of the recipients. In the language of Harris, the eloquent author of "*The Great Teacher*," "The church became one region of life—of divine vitality throughout, in which whosoever breathed, lived—enjoyed life in perfection. From a state of unsightly barrenness and drought, it was suddenly covered with verdure, like the garden of the Lord. Believers themselves seemed re-converted : if sinners became saints, saints themselves became as angels ; thus fulfilling the prophecy which said, 'The weak shall be as David, and David as the angel of the Lord.' Every Christian saw in every other the face of an angel—looks of benevolence and brotherly love ; one interest prevailed,—one subject of emulation swallowed up every other ; who should approach nearest to the likeness of Christ ; which should do most for the enlargement of his reign." "The whole community of them that believed were of one heart, and of one mind ; the spirit of Christ animated the whole—became the one heart of the whole community, and every particular pulse beat in concert with it."

However faint-hearted and fearful the disciples were previous to this event, their faith in their risen Lord, and their attachment to his cause, were now like Mount Zion, which could not be moved. Peter, the trembling culprit, before an idle servant girl denying with oaths and curses that he even knew Jesus of Nazareth, could now stand up manfully before the Jewish Sanhedrim, and charge upon them the murder of the Lord of Glory.

Never was change wrought in men on earth more thorough, than was that wrought in the followers of Christ by the baptism with the Holy Ghost. Their love and zeal were kindled to a flame. They were ready to go any where, to be any thing, and to do any thing, so that he might be glorified by them. They "kept back nothing of all that they possessed" from his sacred cause ; but brought every

If, however, their "peace was like a river,"—"broad, deep, and perpetual,"—and if from them "flowed rivers of living water," they certainly were not as inconstant as modern Christians generally are.

thing,—time, talents, property, body and soul, and laid all at his feet. They consulted not with flesh and blood as to the path of duty—neither did they love husband or wife, parent or child, or even their own life in comparison with him. They were now endued with a measure of almighty power, which none of their enemies could gainsay or resist. It was not only evident to the rulers of the Jewish nation that they had been with Jesus Christ, but even to all men that Jesus Christ was with them. Wherever they went, all obstacles vanished before them, so that they triumphed in every place in making known the savor of Christ's name. Under their ministry converts were multiplied as the drops of the dew, and the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily.

This power was also the promise of Christ to come again to his followers, and be with them in all their labors and through all their life. And the primitive church rejoiced more in this spiritual presence of her Lord, than his immediate followers had in his personal presence. Christ was in them the hope of glory; and he gave them a joy and a peace which the world could neither give nor take away. They lived above the world while they lived in it, and walked by faith and not by sight. The love of Christ constrained them to holy obedience and holy zeal; it sustained them under every trial, and caused them to rejoice whether in prosperity or in adversity,—whether among friends or enemies,—whether in life or in death. “I will not leave you comfortless,” said Christ, “but will come unto you;” and in this “power from on high” he abundantly fulfilled his gracious promise.*

* That the baptism with the Holy Ghost was thus a sanctifying power is evident from the words of Christ, John vii. 38—“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from him shall flow rivers of living water.” “But this spake he, (says John,) of the spirit, which they that believe on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” Now the primitive Christians, under the influence of this baptism, did believe all the scripture testimony concerning Christ;—they were “full of faith,” and “rivers of living water” did flow through and from their souls;—the “Spirit” was in them “as a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Consequently “the multitudes of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul, and great grace was upon them all.”

Paul also assures us that this baptism was a sanctifying influence. 2 Cor. iii. 18—“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord.” The meaning of this and the preceding verse, is probably this—“Now the Lord is

II. *Why was this power granted to the primitive Church?*

It was pre-eminently to qualify its members for the great and important work assigned them of revolutionizing the world. Never were created beings, on earth, certainly, even if in the universe, called to a more difficult and responsible work than were the followers of our Lord. They were commanded to go into all the world, and carry on an offensive warfare against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places, and wrest the earth out of the hands of the usurper who claimed to be its God. They needed then one "stronger than the strong man armed," to go with them, or Satan would but mock at their feeble endeavors. His kingdom was not to be overthrown by human might and power, but by the spirit of the living God. If men, therefore, were the appointed agents for its overthrow, they must be endued with power from on high, else they would labor in vain, and "spend their strength for nought and in vain."

Again, Christ designed that the glory of the New Testament church should excel that of the Old, (Testament church,) as the brightness of the sun excels the glimmerings of a star. Ancient saints had at best enjoyed but the twilight of the day of salvation. But upon the New Testament church the sun had risen, and the full

that spirit;" of whose glorious ministration he had previously spoken; i. e. Jesus Christ is by this ministration revealed in the soul, so that the believer sees, as in a mirror, his glorious character and grace, and is thus changed into his moral image; has "the same mind wrought in him that was also in Christ;" and being thus made a "partaker of the divine nature, he is enabled to escape the corruptions that are in the world." Now evidently if he is filled with this spirit,—“filled with all the fulness of God,”—he is “a sanctified vessel, meet for the Master’s use.” In the very nature of the case, no person can be “full of the Holy Ghost,” unless every power and faculty of his soul is brought into sweet subjection to the will of God. The spirit does not literally dwell in the human body, as in a “temple,” without thereby imparting to it any of his own holy nature; his indwelling is spirit acting upon spirit—mind upon mind;—ruling in the soul by love; purifying it, and rendering it like Christ—“holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” Such were those early Christians who could say with John, “As He was, so are we in this world.” I do not say that the spirit does not operate upon the mind without producing this entire change; for I believe there are different degrees of sanctification, from “faith as a grain of mustard seed,” to perfect faith: but evidently any thing short of “perfect love,” is not the fulness of the spirit’s operation:—and if being “full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith,” does not produce “perfect love,” no operation of the spirit, as I conceive, can produce it.

glory of the Lord had shined upon her. Isaiah had prophetically addressed the Christian church with the exhortation, "Arise; shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." And with other ancient prophets he had triumphed in view of the glory of Messiah's reign, when "a little one was to become a thousand, and a small one as a great nation;" when "the feeble should be like David, and the house of David like God and the angel of the Lord." Christ had also himself testified to the same point in the declaration that John the Baptist, although the greatest prophet that had ever been on earth, was less than the least minister in the gospel church. But how was this stupendous change to be wrought? Whence was this transforming power to come, that this prediction might be fulfilled? We know how the change was accomplished by the baptism with the Holy Ghost. The church suddenly arose out of obscurity, and at once became beautiful as Tirza, comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners.

Again. John had said that Christ would baptize his people with the Holy Ghost. And just before his ascension to Heaven, Christ himself said to his disciples, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The granting of this power, then, was the completion of Christ's mission to earth—the last gift of God to man,—the only agency by which the world was to be redeemed from the power and dominion of sin.*

And finally, Christ designed, in setting up his kingdom on earth, that the whole work of salvation should be performed by himself. Not a stone in his spiritual temple was to be polished by any other hand than his own;—not a soul saved from earth by any other efficient agency than his own. And yet he would work by subordinate instrumentalities. In appointing men, therefore, instead of angels to carry on his work, it was necessary not only that he should be with them to encourage and enable them to work, but himself work in them, that the glory might all belong to him. In this sense the whole work of man's salvation begins, centres, and ends in Christ—he is alone in

* "This *power from on high* was the *promise of the Father*, the great promise of the New Testament, as the promise of the coming of Christ was of the Old Testament. And if it be the *promise of the Father*, we may be sure the promise is *invaluable*, and the thing promised *invaluable*."—Henry *in loc.*

it, and of the people there are none with him. His church, although "the light of the world and the salt of the earth," is as emphatically the instrument in his hand, as is the saw or the hammer in the hands of him who handles them.

Never, then, was divine work more appropriate, more indispensable, than the endowment of power from on high to the primitive church. Any thing less than this would have been a failure, not only in the promise of Christ to be with his people, but also in the work he had so auspiciously begun. If he had not thus returned in spirit and filled his disciples with himself, his cause would have died in less time than he had personally spent in giving it life ;—the timid fishermen of Galilee would have returned to their humble occupation—they did so return after the crucifixion and resurrection of their Lord, mourning perhaps over their disappointment, and saying, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel,"—and a world of sinners had still perished in ignorance of the way of salvation, so needful was this endowment of power from on high.

III. Was it the design of Christ to continue this power in the Church to the end of the world?

Undoubtedly it was. Pentecostal baptism was a part of the work which Christ came into the world expressly to perform. John, the immediate herald of the Incarnate Deity, had said of him, that He should "baptize his people with the Holy Ghost;" not a few merely of his primitive followers, but his believing people ;—not that he should regenerate them ; for millions had been regenerated by the Spirit of God, previous to this gift of the Holy Ghost after Christ was glorified. If Christ, then, be the "same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever," he is still "He that shall baptize his people with the Holy Ghost;" and as power from on high was granted by this baptism, we believe that he designed that primitive power should continue with a believing people to the end of the world.

Again, the promise of Christ to be with his people is as valid now as it was eighteen hundred years ago. But how was he with his immediate followers? Let his own words answer :—"It is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you : but if I go away, I will send him unto you, and he shall glorify me ; for he shall take of the things of mine and shall

show them unto you." This promise was fulfilled by the baptism with the Holy Ghost on the day of pentecost, and by subsequent similar effusions on those that believed. How, then, is Christ with his people now? How little, indeed, is he known among his people now! How few, comparatively, have his love shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, after the example of primitive times! How few can speak of him in language peculiar to primitive Christians! How little light, how little heat, how little influence and activity are to be found among those that bear the name of Christ! Few, comparatively, are striving to excel in righteousness;—while it seems to be the great concern with the multitude of his professed followers, to find how little grace they may have and yet escape hell;—how little holy conformity to the will of God they may have, and get to heaven.*

"The chamber where the good man meets his fate," is indeed privileged above the common walks of Christian life—close on the verge of Heaven;—and we call this *dying grace*;—as though the religion of Christ was chiefly designed to render dying believers comfortable, instead of making living believers useful. But in the primitive church Christ fulfilled his promise to be with his people when they were in health, as well as when they were in sickness and in death; as manifestly with Paul when he stood upon Mars' Hill, as when he was "ready to be offered, and the time of his departure was at hand." "Lo, I am with you always," is the promise; not merely when you "pass through the dark valley and shadow of death," but when in faithfulness to my commands, you pursue the ordinary walks of life. And this promise was no more originally designed for the primitive age of the church than for every subsequent age of her existence on earth. The same is also true of the ancient prophetic descriptions of the superior glory and power of the New Testament church. If not, what evidence have we that the church will ever

* The sublime allegory of Bunyan, entitled "*Holy War*," says, that Immanuel left "Mansoul," when the inhabitants began to hold parley with "my lord *Love-the-World*," and "my lord *Carnality*," leaving the citadel in charge of "my lord *Conscience*;" and that immediately "*Diabolus*" sent up an army of "thirty thousand doubters" to assault the place. How much "religion of conscience" there is in the church, and how little of the primitive religion of Christ, I do not presume to decide. This much, however, is certain: "my lord *Love-the-World*," and "my lord *Carnality*" still have a place within her sacred enclosure, and the "thirty thousand doubters" are not yet expelled therefrom.

come up out of the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Peter has certainly appropriated all the ancient promises of this nature to the primitive age, and declared that they received a fulfilment in the baptism with the Holy Ghost. "Yea, (says he,) all the prophets, from Samuel, and all that follow after, have spoken of these days." Now if the baptism with the Spirit, which alone endued the disciples with power from on high, was designed by Christ to be peculiar to the primitive age, then all the ancient predictions of the glory of the gospel church have received their final fulfilment, and we may never again quote them, and hope for a brighter day of gospel light on their account. Nay, John's declaration that Christ baptizeth his people with the Holy Ghost, was applicable only to the primitive church! And even our Lord's own promise to be with his followers to the end of the world, meant only to the end of the Jewish commonwealth! And the cautions, admonitions, and instructions of Paul, originally addressed to Christians who had been baptized with the Holy Ghost, are wholly inapplicable to us who may not expect to be so baptized. To this fearful result are we reduced, if the sentiment be true that the power from on high, promised in the text, was designed by Christ only for the primitive church. *

And, finally, if Christ did not design to continue primitive power in the church to the end of the world, then either that power did not tend to render its subjects holy, and like their Divine Head, or he did not design to continue a like holy church on earth. If primitive Christians were led to an entire consecration of themselves to Christ by this special baptism of the Spirit, then they could not have been led to such a consecration in any other way; and either the modern church must be baptized with the same Spirit, or never in this world

* By what scripture authority is it said that,—beside the spirit of inspiration, and the power of working miracles, both of which were possessed by some men previous to the day of Pentecost, and by but very few after that period—there was a special gift of the Holy Ghost to the apostles and primitive Christians, which subsequent believers have no right to expect? That such is the almost universal sentiment in the church, I am well aware; but I am utterly unable to account for this prevalent belief, but upon the principle of *unbelief* in the word and testimony of Jesus Christ. Certainly the Bible teaches no such doctrine; and it is as really a "tradition, which makes the word of God (comparatively) of no effect," as was any ancient tradition of the Jews, or any modern dogma of the Romish church.

be entirely consecrated to Christ. Settle the question, what was the effect of the endowment of power from on high in the primitive age, and also whether a similar power is not essential to the highest prosperity of the church now, and we can judge whether our Lord designed to produce a similar effect by a similar cause, in any other age of the church than the primitive. Christians need moral courage now as much as they did eighteen hundred years ago. The world needs a high standard of holiness in the church now as much as it did then. And if we cannot have the same power from on high that primitive Christians had, we cannot "follow them as they followed the Lord." They were raised up and appointed of God to be examples to all who should follow them in the church of what is the true spirit of Christianity. And if Christ did not design to continue the same power to succeeding generations of believers that he granted to his immediate followers, he might as well have sent a company of angels to be our patterns, as a generation of men baptized with the Holy Ghost. We could follow the one without the baptism as easily as the other; and without it, we can follow neither.*

* The pastoral letter of the General Association of Mass. for 1840, says:—"In the primitive age of the church, Christians literally, and with entire purpose, consecrated themselves and all their possessions to the cause of Christ. They felt they were not their own, but his who had died to redeem them; and they denied themselves, took up their cross daily, and followed him. Under the influence of this deep and fixed impression, they went forth and labored to advance the cause they so much loved; and the Holy Ghost went with them, making the word and means quick and powerful: sinners by hundreds and thousands were converted, and the religion of the cross spread in a few centuries over the greater part of the then known world."

"May it not, then, be reasonably expected at the present day, that if the principle of entire consecration^(a) existed in the hearts of Christians generally, there would be greater displays of converting and sanctifying grace?"

Thus far the General Association. Now I would ask—what but the "power from on high," promised in the text, led primitive Christians to this "entire consecration" to Christ? and if for nearly seventeen hundred years Christians have been generally destitute of a like spirit of consecration, what but "power from on high" will re-produce it, that the word of the Lord may again "mightily grow and prevail" on earth? Certainly those who had seen Christ face to face, and been eye witnesses of his glory, did not need *power from on high* to lead them to entire consecration to him, any more than we do, who live in these ends of the earth. And if they had never been thus consecrated without the power, so neither will the modern church ever be thus consecrated without it.

(a) "The term consecration is synonymous with holiness. Holiness is a communi-

But the question may arise in the mind of the serious inquirer after truth,—why has not this “power” remained in the church, if it was the design of Christ to continue it to any other than the first age thereof? I answer: The subjects of this *power* were not mere passive machines, but free agents, still under the infirmities and temptations of life: and, consequently, capable of improving or abusing the *power* thus granted them. Some improved the talent better than others; and some churches, even while under apostolic instruction, departed from the faith. Paul himself predicted a falling away from primitive power and purity, and the rise of the “man of sin” in the church. Why our Lord permitted this falling away, is among the deep things of God of which we have no right to speak. But this may be said:—an apostate church could not possess the *power*, and exhibit the glory of the true church. While, then, the nominal church arrogated to herself the title and privileges of the “Bride,” the true witnesses for Christ were left in his holy sovereignty to “prophecy in sackcloth,” without the habiliments and glory of the primitive church, “*the fine linen, clean and white,*” with which she is again to be adorned.*

But why was not the church again “endued with power from on high,” at the time of the reformation? I answer: This promised gift is bestowed only in answer to the prayer of faith. The word of Christ still is, “according to thy faith, be it unto thee;” and, “if ye will not believe, neither shall ye be established.” If the primitive disciples had not believed that Christ designed to “endue them with power from on high,” and had not sought the blessing, they would not have received it. The reformed church believed that this *power* was peculiar to the primitive age—a purely miraculous gift—she did

cable perfection, and no creature possesses it in the same degree and manner that God does. God is eternally holy—the fountain of holiness. Creatures are holy by derivation. God is infinitely holy. Creatures are holy in a finite degree. God is immutably holy. But creatures, as it respects holiness, are liable to change.”—*Rev. Dr. Cogswell's Letters to Students.*

* All commentators, I believe, agree that the prediction in Rev. xix. 7, 8, refers to the millennial state of the church on earth; when “the marriage of the Lamb will come; and his espoused church, being purified from heresies, divisions, and anti-Christian corruptions, in doctrine, discipline, worship, and practice, will be made ready, and meet to be publicly owned by Him as his delight and his beloved.”—*Scott.*

not pray for it, and, consequently, she did not receive it. Christ gave her all she believingly asked for; and had she asked for more, she would have received more, even until her joy was full. Had she sought "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ," which is certainly all that primitive Christians enjoyed, her prayers would have been heard and answered by her Lord, and the same reason still prevails to keep the blessing out of the church. Few, comparatively, among her members believe in the baptism with the Holy Ghost, except so far as they received in regeneration: few pray for it: and, consequently, few receive it. It is not strange, then, that an unbelieving church has not received the blessing, since it is granted only to those who believe.

But miracles and the gift of tongues are supposed to have stood connected with this endowment of *power*. If the *power* is again granted the church, may we expect the primitive accompaniments also with it? I answer: All that received "the fulness of the blessing" did not work miracles; all did not speak with tongues, as is evident from 1 Cor. xii. 28—30; of course these gifts did not necessarily accompany the blessing. Besides, first the apostles, and then the seventy disciples, were empowered by Christ to work miracles, long before they were endued with this power;—see Matt. x. and Luke x.* "And these signs shall follow those that believe," said Christ: "they shall speak with tongues," &c. Now, evidently, multitudes

* When the disciples inquired of our Lord, Matt. xvii. 19, why they could not cure a certain severe case of lunacy, he answered them—"Because of your unbelief:" not, because you are not empowered so to do. He had previously authorized them to do such a work; but their success depended entirely upon the strength of their faith in his ability and grace to work with them. As "power from on high" made them "full of faith," as well as "full of the Holy Ghost," "unbelief," of course, would not subsequently prevent them from performing any miracle which the providence of God should open the way for their doing. All the miracle-working power, then, that they received by the baptism with the Holy Ghost, was the strengthening and perfecting their faith in the promises and presence of their Lord. It was their faith that, at all times, gave them the victory. In Mark xvi. 17, above quoted, it is expressly said that miraculous "signs" should "follow them that believe;" evidently not that every believer should perform every enumerated miracle: for Paul assures us that such was not the case, in 1 Cor. xii. 29, 30; but that faith was requisite for the performance of any one. The more perfect the faith, the more successful the performance. "Power from on high" rendered its subjects "full of faith;" consequently such as the Spirit employed were abundantly qualified to perform the assigned work.

believed on Christ to the saving of their souls, even in the primitive age, before they were baptized with the Holy Ghost ; as was the case with the inhabitants of Samaria, and the twelve disciples whom Paul met at Ephesus ; and many also, probably, never did receive the baptism until death, as is evident from Rom. i. 11. Miracles were never performed to gratify human curiosity, but only to prove the presence of Christ with his people. If they are never again called for, for this particular purpose, they will never again be wrought on earth. When Christ returns to build up Zion, as he certainly will return, he will make the nations to know that he is with his people, by the wonders he will enable them to do. "They shall have power to stop the windows of heaven that it rain not, and to afflict the earth with all plagues as often as they will;" for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

As to the *gift of tongues*, the diversity of language, which is the greatest hindrance to the propagation of the gospel on earth, was a special judgment of God for the presumption and sin of man. There was a peculiar propriety, then, in removing this hindrance out of the way of the primitive church, by an act as special as was that which at first produced it. Whether such a special interposition of Heaven will ever again be called for, is more than any man is authorized to say. The celebrated Archbishop Tillotson, as quoted by Matthew Henry, expressed the opinion two hundred years ago, that if men of honest intent, and "full of the Holy Ghost," were to go out to the heathen to preach Christ to them, no doubt he would as abundantly qualify them for their important work, as he did the primitive preachers of righteousness. What he will do in this relation we know not now ; but it will be known when he shall return to build up Zion, and make her a praise in the whole earth.

REFLECTION I. *We see in the light of this subject why Christians so generally walk in darkness, and know so little of the love of Christ shed abroad in their soul.* They are not like primitive Christians, "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost;" the "Comforter" is not so sensibly present with them. By the Spirit they have been led to feel that they are sinners, and need a Saviour ; and also to seek the Lord and "strive to make their calling and election sure." But they have not received "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ," and, consequently, their "joy in the Lord is not full ;"

neither are they able, with ancient "saints, to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God." They are generally strangers to those "joys which are unspeakable and full of glory," of which Peter speaks. The only power, then, that can render the modern church what ancient prophets predicted it should be, and what the primitive church was, is the *baptism with the Holy Ghost*, of which she is now evidently generally ignorant and destitute. And this *power from on high* would bring her "up out of the wilderness," and give her speedily the whole earth for a possession.

REFLECTION 2. *We see in the light of this subject why modern ministers and missionaries are no more successful in the great work assigned them by their Lord.* They are not, like primitive preachers, "endued with power from on high;" not, like them, "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost;" and, consequently, not like them, eminently successful in the work of the Lord. I speak not this with slanderous intent of my brethren in the ministry. But who will pretend that the great body of them have that spirit of "entire consecration" to Christ that primitive preachers had? Or that, like them, they "preach in demonstration of the spirit and of power?"

The church, through her ministers, is now laboring in the stupendous work assigned her by her Lord, like Samson, shorn of his locks. She may have more than the strength of a man with her, but she has not "power from on high;" the strength of the living God; and she will labor, comparatively, in vain, until by faith she looks to Christ, and receives the *baptism of the Holy Ghost*. The command of Christ to every gospel minister still is, "Tarry ye—if not in Jerusalem, certainly at the throne of grace,—until ye be endued with power from on high."* And no one can successfully preach the

* "A man should be as much ashamed, and far more afraid, to enter the ministry unbaptized with the Holy Ghost, than he is to enter it unacquainted with the original languages of the holy scriptures." "Until preaching be itself a 'demonstration of the spirit and of power,' its effects will neither be very great nor very good. It will win but few souls to Christ, and their character will not rise high in the beauty of holiness, nor in the zeal of love. They may just keep their name and their place in the church of the living God, but they will not be to him, nor to his church, 'for a name and an everlasting sign.'" "Saying *what* Christ did is not enough for a minister; he should say it *as* Christ did."—*Philip's Life of Whitefield*.

gospel until he is endued with all the power peculiar to the gospel dispensation ; until he can come to sinful men in all "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." The Captain of our salvation is dishonored when his spiritual warriors go into the field to contend with "principalities and powers," without having on the whole armor of the gospel. In such case they go forth only to be defeated, and to bring reproach upon the sacred name by which they are called. The weapons of our warfare are the same now that they were when primitive preachers wielded them so successfully ; and it is but an abuse of the sovereignty of God to ascribe to him our want of success, if we labor without the "power from on high," which primitive Christians possessed. We can do as great things for Christ as they did, with the same endowment that they had. And greater things than they did, modern ministers must do, before the earth can be filled with the knowledge and glory of the Lord. If the world is to be *literally* converted to Christ during the present century, eighty thousand converts a day, from this time to the year 1900, will barely suffice to do it, allowing for the changes made by births and deaths through two generations. And yet the church, with so stupendous a work before her, is contented to labor on without that "power from on high," which so eminently fitted the primitive disciples for their conflict with the powers of darkness. The Lord in mercy speedily return to his bleeding Zion, and cause her to "arise and shine, her light being come, and the glory of the Lord being risen upon her." "Then shall she break forth on the right hand and on the left, and converts shall again be multiplied as the drops of the dew." "Even so ; come Lord Jesus ; come quickly."

NOTE.—Since writing the above, I have, for the first time, seen and read the admirable work of REV. DR. SKINNER, entitled, "*The Religion of the Bible* ;"—from which I make the following extract : "The order of ministers needed for the conversion of the world, is one formed exactly, and in all respects,—except inspiration and the power to work miracles,—on the apostolical model. The same work substantially is to be done now, which was undertaken by the apostles ; and men as full of the strength and the graces of the Holy Spirit as they were, are apparently as indispensable. It is only when the appropriate business

of the church is misjudged of, that a doubt on this subject can be indulged. If that business was to keep up religion to the low common level to which it has attained among men, ministers of the common stamp might suffice: but to pervade the immense wastes of heathenism with the genuine spirit and influences of Christianity,—to have the gospel sounded throughout the countries of Europe, throughout China, Hindoostan, Burmah, Persia, Arabia, the coasts and unexplored recesses of Africa, and all the forests of America, and islands of the ocean, as it is in the most favored part of our own territory,—to achieve this end, men of the same spirit are wanted, as those who, under the direct commission of Christ, preached the word of salvation with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven. Few such men, however, are now in the field. We have intelligent men, and pious men, and laborious men; but the work to be done demands men filled with all the fulness of God; men like Paul, and Brainard, not needing, from the abundance of the divine communications to their souls, to consult with flesh and blood; nor to depend on the sympathies of their brethren; but ready always to go, solitarily, if need be, into any desert part of the earth, trusting for support in Him who feedeth the young ravens when they cry. Such men, with few exceptions, the church has not obtained; and, is it not equally true, *that such men the church has not sought?* The church, straitened in herself, has had no just views of the immensity of her Lord's resources. Her faith, her desires, and her expectations have been proportional to her views. She has appeared to be afraid of excess in her requests, when in fact she has comparatively asked nothing in the name of Christ. Why should she not prepare herself to receive a ministry as large as the wants of man, and as excellent as that of the apostolical age? Let it not be thought incredible that such a ministry will yet be seen on earth. How slow is the course of the gospel, for want of preachers so replenished with grace, by the unction of the Holy Spirit. We have seen that in the midst of the unparalleled doings of these times, the cause of salvation may remain almost at a stand; nay, at the very centre and spring of action, there sometimes seems to be a backward movement. At best we struggle on, amidst mingled triumphs and defeats, hopes and fears. Not so advances the cause of evil, the work of destruction, among the souls of unevangelized and unconverted men. Is there never to be a change? Is there no help, no way to accelerate the work of recovering mercy? There is a way. Let Zion awake and stir herself up to take hold of the almighty hand of God. Let her sons and her daughters array themselves in those

shining garments of salvation, which made first Christians the wonder and the light of the world; let them give the Hearer of prayer no rest, until he send forth a ministry numerous as is wanted, and with qualifications such as were granted at the first. Here is the 'door,' and the only 'door of hope.' Truly if there ever was a period when the whole Christian world should be down upon their faces before the throne of mercy, imploring with all the importunity, and boldness, and perseverance of faith, a race of ministers, each full of the Holy Ghost, as was Barnabas or Paul, that period is the one which is now passing over us."

We consider the doctrine of the foregoing sermon of vast importance to the church. We had an article of the same import in our first volume. But as it was of ordinary length, it was necessarily far less explicit than the foregoing, which we are happy to present to our readers. It is full of interest. Brethren, read it, and read it again. And let us obtain the "power from on high:" then will our "peace be as a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea." EDS. GUIDE.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

SACRED MEDITATIONS.

"Pray without ceasing."

This is the secret of holy living. Keep up a constant intercourse with thy Almighty Friend, who alone is thy strength to resist every temptation, and keep thee in the narrow way of holiness. Think none of thy concerns too small to mention to him. No sin is small, and, therefore, no temptation trifling. Remember he careth for thee. He notices the sparrow, and will he not much more care for thee? Yes, he careth for thee, or he had never been the Lamb slain for thy sins. *Pray without ceasing*, for thou wilt never be where thou hast no need of strength from him to aid thee. Let all thy actions be

performed as in the sunlight of his presence. Lay open every thought and feeling to his hallowed inspection, and let the union of thy soul with him, by constant prayer, be perfect, be entire. Thus wilt thou receive his breath into thine own, and breathe out purity as freely as thou breathest air.

"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

There is a spiritual training of the understanding and heart, which is gained only in the school of Christ. Sitting down at the feet of Jesus, with the desire to know his will, *in order to do it*, the mind is enlightened, and the heart is cultivated in the knowledge of spiritual things. It is then we see light in his light. An ancient proverb says, "Shut the windows, that the house may be light." When we shut up our souls to God's teachings, renouncing our own wisdom as folly, it is then we *see* and *hear* and *feel* God. Thus discerning God, coming in contact with him, the soul increases in wisdom and spiritual understanding; light and more light, and still increasing light, as the soul is expanded to receive it, shines in, and God is studied, and God is known. This increase in the knowledge of God is the only bliss of the soul here, and is the soul's happiness in heaven. To know God, still knowing, and yet never known, is the lesson of eternity.

"The kingdom of God is within you."

As the sun rising scatters the shades of night, and makes the objects of nature visible, so when Jesus comes into the soul, the darkness of the mind is dispelled, the soul clearly discerns spiritual things, and is made happy in the possession of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Look not here, look not there, for the coming of Christ's kingdom, saying, Is the Gentile and the Jew brought in, but turn thine eye inward, and ask, Is the kingdom of God come within my own soul? One soul, and one only, hast thou the entire dominion over. Is the kingdom of God come there? "It is not meat and drink, external rites and observances, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Is Jesus enthroned in thy bosom, and is every discordant passion hushed to peace? Is thy will meekly subservient, yea, lost and blended in his will? Does every emotion in thy breast beat in unison with holiness? This is the reign of

Christ on earth, his reign in thy heart. O hasten the reign of righteousness on earth ; the reign of Jesus in the hearts of his people.

" Eat, O friends, drink ; yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

Is this thy voice, O Jesus, and is the banquet all prepared, and are we welcome to the feast? Yes, it is thy voice, " Eat, O friends, drink abundantly, O beloved." Not as aliens, not as strangers, but as *friends*, as beloved ones, are we welcome to the feast. Greeted with the smile of thy approbation, we approach, we come, we cannot stay away. We sit down, and are refreshed. The love that beams from thy face sweetens all that we receive, and we cannot chide ourselves if we would, so unbounded, so free, seems thy compassion toward us. We can only eat, and adore ; fill our vessels, and come for more supplies, and still thy mercy is the same, ever flowing on, as constantly as our wants are recurring. God and man, how intimately connected, and how sweetly united by the golden chain of love. Severed, rent asunder by the fall, but extended again to man, through Jesus. He is the golden link that binds again the soul to God, and God becomes again *our* God, and *our* Father. Glory to God for Jesus, the rock of my salvation, on which I stand secure, upheld by the oath and the promise of God. P. L. U.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

MISTAKES ON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

I. One error on this subject is, that we may *grow up into it*. That is, by conquering one sin after another, and by cultivating the fruits of the Spirit, we may, finally, arrive at the state of being " a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This is not being " sanctified by *faith*," as Paul's doctrine was. Acts xxvi. 18. It is not having " the heart purified *by faith*," but is rather sanctification by works.

It is true we should strive to conquer every sin, " especially that

which most easily besets us ;” and we should also cultivate every grace, those in which we are most deficient, in particular ; but we should do this, not as the unbelieving moralists do, by watchfulness and care merely, but by bringing them all to Christ, and receiving grace *by faith*, to be “ perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

II. There is an idea, which we have often met, in certain classes in society, that if a man enjoys this blessing, he will be *eloquent*. If a minister, or member lives with the love “ that casts out fear,” he is expected to speak far better than other men. That he will speak better than he would, if he did not “ love God with all his heart,” is true. Still, like Moses, he may be deficient in utterance, or, like Paul, who professed to enjoy this blessing, (Phil. iii. 15,) his speech may be “ contemptible.”

III. Some, in seeking “ perfect love,” are expecting that it will give them *pathos*, that they will be like some they have known, persons of deep feeling. There are some who always show strong emotions,—others, who may have more of the “ mind that was in the Saviour,” and more of all of the fruits of the Spirit, whose feelings are always calm. The one is like the ocean, lashed into fury by the tempest’s wrath, and the other like that same ocean, when no rude wind ruffles its bosom.

Strong animal feelings are constitutional with some, they cannot be otherwise if they would ; while others, cast in a different mould, could not, if they would, show their interest in this way. Each has his peculiar characteristics given him by his Maker, and grace, though it sanctifies each, will no more make them alike than it will make their *countenances* alike. Each has his peculiar gift of God ; let him be satisfied with having it “ entirely sanctified.”

IV. Another wrong idea, imbibed by many, is, that one of the most prominent evidences of a state of entire sanctification is *great joy*. That it most generally accompanies this state, is true ; that it *necessarily* does, is an error ; and that, of itself, it is a principal evidence of its attainment, is *far* from the truth. As Mr. Fletcher says, “ It is *holiness*, not happiness, we want.” Faith, living by faith, walking by faith, and that, every moment, is the great proof of this state. Often it is *great peace*, rather than joy, that marks its attainment. That there is great happiness to be enjoyed in this blessing,

is a truth we would have shining on our minds, with all the clearness of an unclouded meridian sun ; but that it is holiness—purely the image of Christ—that we should more especially seek, is an idea that we would have blazing in upon the mind with a strength and clearness that should eclipse the other.

V. But a still greater mistake is, to suppose that it is attained, in some degree, by *agonizing, wrestling, protracted prayer*. It is received and retained by faith *alone*. That we may sometimes have to protract our prayer, like Jacob, or like the Saviour, all night,—that we should never cease praying—is true. But the promise of scripture is, not to long, or earnest, or wrestling prayer, but “all things that ye ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive.” And whenever length, or zeal, or any thing else is substituted for the simple exercise of faith in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have “erred from the faith.”

It is in this blessing, as in justification, that one can have but very indistinct ideas of it by words ; experience only can make us thoroughly understand it. As the justified person generally finds the blessing differing in its nature from his anticipations, though as great as he expected, so the soul who is sanctified wholly, while he finds as great a blessing as he had looked for, yet in many respects it is not what he anticipated. God came in his own way, he gave the blessing, it may be “in a still voice,” while he was gazing at the “whirlwind.” Thus while God takes to himself the honor, he humbles the receiver, “lest he should be exalted, above measure, by the abundance of the revelations given unto him.”

Let this subject be but divested of the errors that now becloud the minds of Christians, as to its nature, and there would not be a humble follower of Christ, who would not embrace it as the very essence of the gospel.

Go on, then, with your Guide, till the whole Christian church is led from the dark mazes of error, to the light of Christian Perfection.

Nov. 1840.

J. M.